



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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#### REGULATIONS AGAINST WATERFOWL BAITING STRENGTHENED

Federal regulations against baiting have been strengthened by making it illegal to hunt ducks and geese on or near grain shocks removed from fields where grown and reshocked in swamp or marsh areas frequented by waterfowl, Assistant Secretary of the Interior Ross Leffler announced today. The hunting restriction does not apply in the case of grain crops properly shocked on the field where grown.

Explanation of the only change in the antibaiting regulation this year was given by Assistant Secretary Leffler as he called attention to the approaching annual campaign of the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior to halt the practices of a few people who do not want to abide by necessary rules of the game while enjoying the sport of waterfowling.

Baiting is roughly defined as the placing of food to attract migratory birds so as to aid the hunter in taking them, the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife explained. The prohibition of the practice is necessary in this day of millions of hunters because the cold facts of "supply and demand" make it impossible to allow a hunting method which results in excessive inroads on migratory bird populations, he said. That is the reason why electronic calls also were eliminated, he added.

"We have daily bag limits so that everybody can have a reasonable opportunity to enjoy duck hunting" explained Mr. Leffler. "Migratory birds, like other wildlife populations, are not numerous enough to permit unregulated harvest. With more and more people going hunting, in order to continue the sport the game take has to be rationed these days. You just can't expect the limit every day. Most people understand that and as good sportsmen abide by the rules. However, those people who want to break one rule by luring birds to their blind with bait don't worry about breaking another by exceeding the limit when the birds are swarming into the bait. There is where the shoe pinches. If they succeeded in getting

away with it, the rest of us would soon have shorter seasons and even smaller bag limits. That's anything but fair. The preservation of the resource requires that we enforce the prohibition against baiting vigorously to the limit of our ability in every part of the country."

Game management agents of the Service are stationed in every State and generally operate with the active assistance of State fish and game enforcement officers. In most States, the prohibition against baiting conforms to that of the Federal Government. In those where it does not, the Service agents enforce the Federal prohibition.

The Federal ban on baiting, Assistant Secretary Leffler explained, is not a new development. It was first imposed in 1935 as the result of widespread public demand to reduce a waterfowl harvest which had reached dangerous proportions in relation to the over-all supply. Waterfowl populations have increased since the days of the "duck depression" but the increase in the number of hunters has been greater in proportion. Under such conditions there can be no return to the old days when baiting was an accepted practice in many areas. The devastating effect on game populations of hunting with the aid of bait has long been recognized by the States who have prohibitions against this practice with respect to resident game birds and animals.

Mr. Leffler pointed out that there are no limitations whatsoever upon the feeding of waterfowl. "It is only when the element of hunting in relation to such feeding enters the picture that our authority to regulate becomes operative."

The necessity for regulations such as these is better understood, concluded Mr. Leffler, when it is considered that our waterfowl populations are subjected to hunting pressure from the Arctic to Mexico for approximately six months of every year.

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